

WHAT IS HINDUISM

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WHAT

IS

HINDUISM ?

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते

मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

"You have right only to perform your
action faithfully never desiring for its fruit."

[Bhagwadgita]

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः माऽगृधः कस्यस्विद् धनम् ॥

“Whatever there is in this world, movable or immovable, is pervaded by the spirit of God. You, therefore, enjoy with what has been bestowed upon you by God as your share, and do not covet what belongs to others.”

(*Ishavasyopanishad*)



श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनिष्ठतात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

“Better is one’s own duty, though destitute of merit than the duty of another, well discharged. Better death in the discharge of one’s own duty; the duty of another is full of danger.”

(*Bhagwadgita*)



FOREWORD

In this booklet, an attempt has been made to give a bird's-eye view of Hinduism in its various aspects. It has been compiled mainly for those of our Hindu brethren who migrated and settled down in different parts of the world long ago, under circumstances which were not happy and favourable. But due to hard work, endurance, integrity and perseverance, they have not only overcome all the difficulties that faced them, but have gradually prospered and now occupy an honoured place in the countries of their adoption.

It is a pity that owing to long foreign rule in India and also due to our apathy and indifference, these Hindu brethren of ours have long remained so cut off from religious and cultural contact with India, that many of them have even forgotten their own mother-tongue and have adopted English or some other European language in its place. In spite of these handicaps, however, they have, to the present day, preserved and kept intact much of their religious and cultural heritage and are proud of it. All honour to them for their love of Hindu Dharma and devotion to Hindu culture ! I hope they will find this booklet useful and informative.

In preparing this booklet I have derived considerable help from the book on "Hinduism" by the Late Swami Shivananda of Rishikesh for which I express my deep sense of gratitude to him. I take this opportunity to pay my tribute of respect to him for what he has done to popularise Hindu religion and Hindu philosophy here and abroad.

—Janardan Bhatt

What is Hinduism ?

‘HINDUISM’ means the Religion of the Hindus. It is a coined English word. Nowhere in Sanskrit literature is the word ‘Hindu’ found in any of the ancient works, nor is it of Sanskrit origin. This word is a corrupt form of ‘Sindhu’, the name of the river Indus in the Punjab. The Persians who were an ancient neighbouring nation, pronounced ‘sa’ (स) as ‘ha’ (ह) and ‘Sindhu’ as ‘Hindu’. They also named the people living across the river as Hindus and the land inhabited by the Hindus as ‘Hindustan’. The Greeks who came in contact with the Hindus later on, converted the word ‘Hindu’ into ‘Indoi’ from which the word ‘India’ comes.

The real name for India in Sanskrit literature, is Bharat or Bharatvarsha, after the name of King Bharat who ruled over a large part of India in ancient times. It was also called ‘Aryavarta’ or the land of the Aryans. ‘Arya’ is a Sanskrit word and means one who is noble, gentle, high-minded, generous, righteous and good. In other words, a man who possesses all the noble qualities is an Arya.

Definition of Dharma

The real name for Hinduism is ‘Dharma’. It is very difficult to translate the word ‘Dharma’ in English. It is wrongly translated as ‘Religion’ which does not give

the true significance of the word. As a matter of fact Sanskrit has no word corresponding to the word religion of western countries. The word Dharma has been derived from the Sanskrit root "Dhri" (धृ) which means to hold, to support, to maintain and to protect. Dharma is, therefore, that which supports, sustains, maintains and holds this world. It is the all-powerful, eternal, divine law of God that sustains and holds together all the creatures of the world. It has been said in the Mahabharata, the great epic of India, that anything that helps to unite all and brings about universal brotherhood is Dharma. And any thing that creates discord, disharmony and hatred is Adharma. Dharma brings, as its consequence, happiness in this world and the world beyond. Dharma is the protector of man. If you protect Dharma, it will protect you. But if you transgress it, it is sure to kill you. It is man's sole companion after death. When a man dies, nothing goes with him. Only it is Dharma that accompanies him. Dharma has, therefore, been defined by a great sage of India, the Rishi Kanada, as that which leads to the attainment of Abhyudaya (prosperity) in this world and Nishreyasa (Eternal bliss) or salvation after death. Dharma has also been translated by the word 'Duty'. But really Dharma is more than duty. Dharma is all comprehensive and all-pervasive. It pervades every activity of man from birth to death.

The Oldest Religion

Hinduism is the oldest religion of the world. It has come down to us from times immemorial. Where-as all

the other existing religions of the world were born only one thousand or two thousand years ago and named after their founders, Hindu Dharma is the one and only religion which is not named after any person and which began from the very beginning of the world and has continued to the present day. Hinduism does not owe its existence to any prophet. Unlike Christianity and Mohammadanism, Hinduism does not depend for its existence on any man, and is not based on the teachings of any individual. Nor does it consist in having faith in a particular person like Christ or Mohammad. Its foundation is laid on the bed-rock of those eternal values which have stood the test of time for millions of years and can be tested on the touch-stone of logic and reason.

Sanatan Dharma : Eternal Religion

Hinduism is also known by the name of Sanatan Dharma. Sanatan Dharma means Eternal Religion. It is called eternal, because it is as old as the creation itself. The entire structure of Hindu life is built on eternal truths which were discovered by the Hindu Rishis or Seers of old, after long penance, meditation and passionate search for truth. That is the reason why this structure of Hinduism has lasted through vicissitudes of millions of years.

The fundamental and eternal truths of Hindu religion are fixed and unchanging, like the laws of nature which prevailed thousands of years ago and still prevail. The spiritual truths, discovered and taught by the Hindu

Rishis in the hoary past, have not changed and still hold good. Hence the name 'Sanatan Dharma' was given to Hinduism by the sages, the Rishis and the Munis of old.

Vaidik Dharm

Hinduism is also known by the name of Vaidik Dharma, because the earliest literature in which it found expression, is the 'Veda', the oldest book known to the world.

Manava Dharma : Universal Religion

Hinduism is also known as Manava Dharma or Universal Religion. It is so called, because of its comprehensiveness to suit the needs of human beings, irrespective of age, colour or race. Lord Manu, the earliest law-giver of India, has defined Dharma as the aggregate of such universal virtues as truth, forbearance, forgiveness, non-anger, non-stealing, self-control, purity of mind and body, discrimination between right and wrong and knowledge both of spiritual and mundane matters.

Spirit of Hinduism

Hinduism, based as it is on such universally approved virtues, is all-pervasive and all-comprehensive. Regarding the all-pervasive character of Hinduism, let us see what a foreigner has to say about it. Sir Monier

Williams, for many decades Baden Professor of Sanskrit in Oxford University, describes Hinduism in the following words :—

“A characteristic of Hinduism is its receptivity and all-comprehensiveness. It claims to be the one religion of humanity, of human nature, of the entire world. It cares not to oppose the progress of any other system. For it has no difficulty in including all other religions within its all-embracing arms. And in real truth Hinduism has something to offer which is suited to all minds. Its very strength lies in its infinite diversity of human character and human tendencies”

The Main Hindu Scriptures

For the purpose of this booklet I have included the following as the most important scriptures of the Hindus namely, THE VEDAS, THE UPANISHADS, THE SMRITIS, THE PURANAS, THE RAMAYANA, THE MAHABHARATA and the BHAGVADGITA. A brief note on each is given below :

The Vedas

The Vedas are the fountain-head of Hinduism. The Word ‘Veda’ means knowledge. The Vedas contain eternal truths governing the destiny of man, regardless of age, time and country. The Vedas were revealed to the Rishis of old. The word ‘Rishi’ means a seer. The Rishis were the Mantra-Drashta i. e. the seers of Mantras and not the authors of them, The Vedas were

not put to writing. They were received through the ear and transmitted by the mouth to another through his ear. Therefore, the Vedas are called Shruti, that is what is heard. They were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. The Vedas are undoubtedly the most ancient books in the library of man. Even European scholars who are not favourably inclined towards Hinduism, say that the Vedas are the oldest book in the world. The date of the Vedas has never been fixed and it can never be fixed.

“The Vedas” says Swami Vivekananda, “do not owe their authority to any body, they are themselves authority, being the eternal knowledge of God. They were never written, never created. They existed throughout time. Just as creation is infinite and eternal, without beginning and without end, so is knowledge of God without beginning and without end. And this knowledge is what is meant by the Vedas, which contain that knowledge.”

Originally the Veda was one, but later on the great sage Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata and the Puranas, divided it subject-wise, into four great books, namely the Rig Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. It was due to this that the sage came to be known as ‘Veda Vyasa’ that is one who divided the Veda into four parts, according to the subject-matter dealt with there-in.

The upanishads

The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas. They are highly philosophical works which

dwell mainly on the knowledge of Brahma or the Supreme Being. They are called Vedanta, because they contain the gist of the Vedas, which is knowledge of Supreme Being. Let us see what Shri Rajgopalachari, the great Indian leader, says about the Upanishads:

“In the Upanishads we have a scripture which among all the holy scriptures of the world, displays the most scientific spirit in connection with spiritual enquiry. The sages whose thoughts and teachings we read in the Upanishads, seem to be as much inspired by constructive doubt as the most modern men of science. The questions and answers as contained in the Upanishads, indicate that they lived in an age, when men thirsted for Truth and the atmosphere was charged with the boldest free thought.”

Even Western scholars of note have paid their tributes of respect to the seers of the Upanishads. The great Western philosopher Schopenhaver, was very much impressed and influenced by the teachings of the Upanishads. He has paid eulogy to the Upanishads in the following words : “The study of the Upanishads is the most rewarding and the most elevating reading which there can possibly be in the world. It has been the solace of my life and will be the solace of my death.”

The most important of the Upanishads are Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Kaushitaki and Shwetashwatara.

The Smritis

The Smritis are the ancient law-codes of the Hindus. They lay down laws which regulate national, domestic and religious obligations and duties of the Hindus in every sphere of life.

The Hindu learns how he has to spend his whole life from these Smritis. The Smritis prescribe certain acts and prohibit some others, according to the stage of life of a man.

The Smritis have varied from time to time. The injunction and prohibitions of the Smritis are related to the particular social surroundings. As these surroundings and conditions of Hindu society changed from time to time, new Smritis had to be compiled by the sages of different ages and different parts of India.

The main Smritis are eighteen in number, but the most important of them are the Smritis compiled by Manu, Yagyavalkya and Parashar respectively. Of them also, Manu stands unsurpassed, not only in India but in the literature of the world for many of his rules regarding individual conduct and social duties.

The Puranas

The Puranas have played an important part in popularizing Hinduism among the masses. Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa, the son of Parashar, is said to be the author of the Puranas. The word Purana means ancient history. The Puranas were written to popula-

rise the religion of the Vedas. The object of the Puranas is to acquaint the masses, in an easy and interesting way, with the teachings of Hindu religion and to generate in them devotion to God, through concrete examples, myths, stories, legends, lives of great men, allegories and descriptions of great historical events. The Puranas were not meant for the scholar, but for the ordinary people who could not understand high philosophy and could not study the Vedas. The Puranas contain the history of remote times. They are interesting to read and are full of information of many kinds. They are eighteen in number of which the Bhagwat Purana is most famous and popular.

The Ramayana

The Ramayana, the first epic poem in classical Sanskrit, was composed by Valmiki, the first Indian poet. In the Ramayana the sage Valmiki describes the greatness of the life, character and historic deeds of Rama. Rama has been described by Valmiki as a perfect man in all respects. Truth and duty were the watch-words of Bhagwan Rama. Nothing ever induced him to depart from his ideals of truth and duty. He was as great in prosperity as in adversity. Sita, his wife, was a type of perfect womanhood. Lakshman and Bharat were ideal and devoted brothers. Hanuman was the type of the duty which a servant and a devotee owes to his master and object of devotion. Ravana stands out as an example of indomitable courage and force of character which was directed more towards personal gratification

than towards the protection of virtue and thus brought about the ruin of his kingdom and his family.

The Ramayana is not only an epic. It is a part of Hindu life. We can not understand Hindu Dharma unless we know Rama and his lofty character. Rama furnishes the noblest ideal for Hindus to follow. So his name has become a house-hold word among the Hindus. It affords consolation to millions of men. Ramayan both of Valmiki in Sanskrit and of Tulsidas in Hindi, is read everywhere in India with faith and devotion. "Ram nam Satya" is repeated when a Hindu's dead body is carried to the cremation ground. Rama lives in the heart of millions of Hindus everywhere. Rama's life is acted every year as Ram Lila, in almost every place of Northern India. That shows how deep is the hold he has on the minds of the Indian people. Rama Rajya is considered as the ideal Government and as an ideal social and political condition. Poet Valmiki has described Ram Rajya in the following words : "In Ram Rajya destitute widows did not exist. Sickness and epidemics were unknown. Deaths from ferocious beasts, robbers and starvation did not occur. There was no fear of wicked men molesting the weak. The subject expected absolute moral standard from the ruler. And as a ruler Rama stood for absolute purity of motive in all aspects of life."

The Mahabharata

The other great Epic of India is the Mahabharata which may be said to be one of the greatest books in

the world. We have in it not only a perfect picture of the India of those days, but also a great teacher of duty to all, the highest and the lowest, in a manner suited to the capacity of each. Ethics, religion and philosophy are here not only inculcated by abstract rules, but by pictures of men and women who carried them out in life. While throughout the whole runs the great lesson of Dharma (duty) namely not to do to others what is not good for one's own self and also the lesson that wealth and pleasure, unless subordinated to Dharma, lead to ruin and that the real conquest is the conquest of baser self.

The life of each of the characters of Mahabharata is a study in itself. Yudhisthira is the embodiment of virtue, Arjuna of courage, Bhim of strength, Duryodhana of pride, Bhishma of wisdom and bravery, Karna of generosity and charity, Draupadi of strength of character and conjugal devotion, while Chief actor in the whole drama is the greatest hero of Indian history—Shri Krishna, the politician, statesman, warrior, philosopher, musician and yogi. He stands out a figure by himself, and the more he is studied, from any standpoint whatsoever, the more reverence does he inspire.

This book has been a source of strength to the people of India during all the vicissitudes through which India has passed in its long history, extending over thousands of years. It has inspired men and women to heroic deeds and has enabled them to face their trials and tribulations with courage and fortitude.

It is a whole literature in itself. It is said about it that "What is not in it, is not in India" (Yanna Bharate tanna Bharate). It may aptly be called the encyclopaedia of Hindu religion. It is also called the fifth veda.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is an important part of the Mahabharata. It is the most precious jewel of Hindu religion. It is a universal gospel. It should be ranked as one of the greatest books, rather the greatest book, in the religious literature of the world. It has been described as "the milk of all the Upanishads" and the "essence of all the Shastras". Within the compass of eighteen chapters comprising 700 verses, it sets forth the Path of Action (the Karma Yoga), the Path of Devotion (the Bhakti Yoga) and the Path of Knowledge (the Gyana Yoga)—all leading towards one goal, namely the realisation of self.

Lord Krishna's main philosophy in the Bhagwad Gita is the philosophy of Karma or action without desire. According to Gita, Karma or action should be done in a spirit of dedication to God. "Do your karma and offer it to God," says Gita. The late Lokamanya Tilak has, therefore, expounded the Gita as the gospel of work.

The occasion when the Gita was preached by Lord Krishna, was the Mahabharata war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Arjuna, the Pandava saw before him arrayed in the battle-field, his relatives,

brothers and preceptors. He fainted at this sight and refused to fight. Then Lord Krishna removed his faint-heartedness by preaching the philosophy of Karma Yoga and convinced him that as a Kshatriya it was his duty to fight, regardless of consequences. Arjun thus gave up his Moha (delusion). His doubts were removed. He fought and won the war.

As a matter of fact Arjuna is a mere symbol. He represents an average man of the world. In this world, man's life is a battle-field, like the battle-field of Kurukshetra. In this battle-field every man is a soldier like Arjuna. There arise occasions and situations in the life of every man when he feels like Arjuna and finds himself unable to decide as to what course of action he should adopt and whether he should do a thing or not. "To be or not to be", "to do or not to do" that is the question which faces him. To such a man the Lord's Bhagwad Gita is the shining lamp to show him the right path of action and help him in deciding the course of action he should adopt.

Mahatma Gandhi on Bhagwad Gita

"I find a solace in Bhagwadgita that I miss in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face, and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagwadgita.

"The Gita is not only my Bible or my Koran : it is much more than that. It is my mother. I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago ; but this

eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom.

“The Gita inculcates the duty of perseverance in the face of seeming failure. It teaches us that we have a right to action only, but not to the fruit thereof, and that success and failure are one and the same thing at bottom”.

Distinguishing Characteristics of Hinduism

Karmayoga or Duty for Duty's sake :— One of the most remarkable things about Hinduism is that there is no concept of **rights** in it. While there is so much emphasis laid on **duties** in Hindu literature, there is nowhere any mention of **rights** which play a very leading part in modern social life. Lord Krishna in his Bhagwad Gita has taught us to perform our duties, whatever they may be, without expecting any gain or reward from anywhere. He has regarded the performance of duties without any desire for gain as the worship of God. In modern age, unfortunately every body thinks more of the rights than of the duties assigned to him.

This leads to strife and war in the world. In Hindu Dharma and Hindu culture, however, a noble attempt has been made to subordinate rights to duties, so as to avoid strife and quarrel and to ensure peaceful order to the society.

Religion of Freedom :— Another remarkable thing about Hinduism is that it allows utmost freedom in religi-

ous belief. Hinduism never says dogmatically that Mukti or salvation is possible only by having absolute or blind faith in a prophet or in a Holy book. It gives utmost freedom to the rational mind of man. It allows widest freedom in matters of worship. It allows perfect freedom to the human reason with regard to questions such as nature of God, soul, creation and the goal of life. It does not force any body to accept any particular dogma or tenet. It allows every body to reflect, investigate and enquire. It is in short a synthesis of all types of religious experiences, and is free from fanaticism.

Discipline in Life :— Hinduism lays special stress on Samskaras or discipline of life. A person without Samskara or discipline is like a horse without reins. A disciplined man is one who has brought his natural propensities under his control. Manu, the earliest law-giver of the world, says that by nature (birth) we are all barbarous, uncultured and uncivilized. It is Samskaras or discipline that raises us to a higher level in life.

Different Forms of Worship :— All men are not born alike. Some are more intelligent, some are less. Some are more advanced spiritually and some are less. Hinduism takes account of all these differences and provides different kinds of spiritual food for all of them, from highest philosophy and metaphysics to the simplest type of idolatry and rituals. All the other religions of the world preach only one path for all and make no provision for dealing with differences between one person and another. Hinduism alone has taken into account,

and catered for, all such differences and made all the requisite provision for every kind of Adhikari or devotee. The result is that no earnest aspirant for salvation is, on account of any of his physical, mental or spiritual disability, declared to be utterly incapable of treading the path of happiness here and salvation hereafter. There is path for every body to satisfy his spiritual hunger and to attain salvation. It is for this reason that we find different forms of worship and various kinds of rituals, side by side, within Hinduism, to suit the nature and inclination of different devotees and different worshippers.

Individual Soul and Universal Soul :— One of the main teachings of Hinduism is that man in his ultimate essence is one with the essence of the world. The Upanishads proclaim this truth in very clear and bold language. "This self is the Absolute Reality" (Ayam Atma Brahma), "I am the absolute" (Aham Brahma Asmi), "Thou art that" (Tat Twam Asi), "Every thing is Supreme Being" (Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma) are some of the great assertions of the Upanishads. According to Hindu seers (Rishis), not only man but also all things, all creatures in the universe, are rooted in one and the same Supreme Being. The Isha Upnishad, one of the oldest of the Upanishads, states about the realisation of Brahma in the following words : "Who-so-ever beholds all beings in the same self and the same self in all beings, does not hate any body. When a man knows that all beings are ultimately the Self and realises this unity, then there remains no delusion or grief for him."

Reason as Guide of Life :— According to Hindu Dharma, Buddhi or reason is the highest mental principle in man. It is the Buddhi or reason which determines the truth or falsity of a judgement, The greatest prayer in the Vedas, in the form of Gayatri Mantra, is for getting our Buddhi or reason inspired by God. In Hindu religion, therefore, there has always been a great emphasis laid on being reasonable in all activities of life. We, therefore, daily pray to God, not for any selfish object but to make our Buddhi (intelligence) pure, inspired and well-directed. This is one of the special features of Hinduism.

The Law of Karma or Action :— The Law of Karma or the Doctrine that every individual has to bear the good or bad consequences of his actions, either in this life or in life to come, is one of the fundamental principles of Hinduism. As a man sows, so he will reap, This is the law of Karma. Your actions in the past are responsible for your condition in the present. Your present actions will shape or mould your future. You can never avoid the result of your actions, good or bad. But if a man performs his actions with selfless and disinterested motive and without attachment, considering that as his duty, he is absolved from the effect of his action. Such action, done without attachment and with no desire to obtain fruit of it, leaves no Sanskar or impression behind and the soul or Atma will be freed from the trammels of birth and death and attain salvation. This is the doctrine of Nishkam Karma or desireless Action, as preached by Lord Krishna in Bhagwad Gita. In this connection the following

verses from the Bhagwad Gita are worth quoting :—

“Your duty is but to act, never to be concerned with the fruit of action. You should never act with the motive or desire of obtaining any fruit of your action.”

“Engage yourself in activities without attachment and without hope of getting any reward and face success and failure, with even composure. This equilibrium or even state of mind, is called Yoga.”

The Doctrine of Rebirth :— The Doctrine of rebirth or transmigration of soul is a fundamental tenet of Hinduism. One does not cease to exist after death. Before this birth one has passed through countless lives. Birth is inevitably followed by death and death by birth. As the Bhagwad Gita says, “Just as a man casting off worn-out garments taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body (soul) casting off worn-out bodies entereth into others that are new.”

The doctrine of rebirth is a corollary to the Law of Karma. The differences of disposition, of nature, of taste, of status and position between one individual and another, are due to their actions in the past birth. Further, all of one's Karma can not and do not bear fruit in this life alone. Therefore, there must be another birth for enjoying the fruit of the remaining actions. Each soul has a series of births and deaths. These births and deaths will continue till one attains knowledge of Brahma or Supreme Being and attains Nirvana or Salvation.

We find that every being is born with some desires which are associated with the things, enjoyed by him in the past life. The desire thus proves the existence of the soul in the previous lives. The Soul after death migrates with Sukshma Sharira or subtle body. This subtle body carries with it all sorts of Samskaras or impressions of the individual soul. Then, in due course, it gathers for itself a new physical body and reincarnates in this world. This, in a nutshell, is the Doctrine of Rebirth or Transmigration of Soul.

Institution of Varnashram :— The institution of Varnashram is a chief peculiarity of Hindu social system. Human society consists of individuals. The individuals are like parts of the machine. If the parts can not work properly, the machine will not work and will come to a stand-still. In the same way, if the individuals that go to make up the society, do not perform their duties efficiently, the society will go out of order and will not perform its function well.

For the efficient working of the Society, the Hindu sages and Rishis advised an ideal scheme of society and an ideal way of individual life, which is known by the name of Varnashram, which means the division of the society into four Varnas and similarly the division of the individual life into four Ashramas.

Originally the division of the society into four Varnas viz. Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras was based on Gunas (qualities) and karma (action or occupation) only. As Lord Krishna has declared in the

Gita : "The division of the Society into four castes was created according to Gunas (qualities) and Karma (occupation or profession) of the individuals " From this it is quite evident that originally these four castes had nothing to do with birth or heredity. In the Mahabharat also, in one place, it is said : "He in whom are seen truth, charity, forgiveness, good conduct, benevolence and mercy, is a Brahmana. Shudra is not a Shudra, nor a Brahmana a Brahmana, except through his characteristics. He in whom are seen these virtues, is a Brahmana. But he should be termed a Shudra, in whom these qualities do not exist, even though he is a Brahmana by birth."

The underlying principle in this division of the society into four varnas, is division of labour. In the society all men are not equally fit for all kinds of work. They have different tastes, different capacity and different qualities. So the Hindu sages and Rishis of old assigned different kinds of duties to different classes of people, according to their aptitude. Those who were fit for spiritual and intellectual work were assigned the duties of the Brahmanas. The work of administration and defence was given to the Kshatriyas. The Vaishyas were entrusted with the work of trade, commerce and agriculture. Those who were fit for manual work were assigned the duties of the Shudras. All the Varnas or castes were indispensable, for the maintenance and progress of the society, and none of them was high or low.

In course of time however, degradation took place in the Hindu society. Many evils crept into the caste

system. The test of ability, quality and character gradually vanished. Birth became the chief criterion in determining castes. All castes fell from their ideals and forgot all about their duties. At the present time Varnashram system exists only in name. It has to be reformed, rebuilt and reorganized in order to reconstruct Hindu Society on a proper basis.

The Four Ashramas :— Just as Hindu society is divided into four Varnas or groups, in the same way the life of an individual is divided into four Ashramas or stages viz. Brahmacharya or the period of studentship, Grihastha or the stage of house-holder, Vanaprastha or the stage of the hermit, and Sanyasa or the life of renunciation. Each stage has its own duties and obligations. These stages help the evolution of man. The practise of the four Ashramas regulates the life of the individual from the beginning to the end.

The first stage, Brahmacharya, is the period of study and discipline. The student should not indulge in any pleasure. He should stay in the house of his preceptor, generally in forest hermitages. These hermitages were the Gurukulas or forest Universities. The children of the rich and the poor lived together in the Gurukulas. The students were required to be hardy and simple in habits.

The second stage is that of the Grihastha or householder. The household stage begins with marriage. Of all the Ashramas, this is the most important, because it supports all the others. Marriage is a sacrament for a Hindu. The wife is his Ardhangani or partner in life.

It is enjoined on the householder that he should earn money by honest means and distribute it in a proper manner. Hospitality is one of the house-holder's chief duties. When the house-holder sees that his sons are able to bear the burden of his duties and his grandsons are born, he along with his wife retires from the world and spends his time in religious study and meditation.

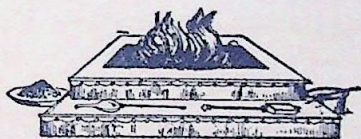
The next stage is that of the Vanaprastha. The Vanaprastha should retire to the forest or a solitary place and begin to meditate on higher spiritual things. He becomes free from all social bonds and the responsibilities of life.

After Vanaprastha, the next stage is that of a Sanyasin. In Sanyasa, a man renounces all possessions all distinctions of caste, all rites and ceremonies and all attachments. He spends his time in meditation or doing good to others. He lives on alms. He is free from likes and dislikes, love and hate, etc. He roams about, disseminating Brahma-Gnyan or knowledge of Self.

At the present moment however, the Ashramas do not function according to the rules as given in Hindu scriptures, as the conditions have been changed very much. But they may be revived in their spirit to the great improvement of modern life. The society can function properly, only if the system of four Ashramas is revived again, with due modification according to modern conditions,

Mahatma Gandhi on Hinduism

“In my opinion the beauty of Hinduism lies in its all embracing inclusiveness. What of substance contained in any other religion is always to be found in Hinduism. And what is not contained in Hinduism is unsubstantial or unnecessary.”



Precepts and Teachings
of
Hinduism

Dharma-Our Only Saviour

Hinduism is not a narrow, dogmatic religion. Nor is it a doctrinal religion, in which a certain set of doctrines is believed with blind faith. It does not say that god is to be worshipped in a particular way only. It does not assert that salvation can be attained only by following a particular path. It does not insist that the way to realisation of Supreme Being is one and one only and that other paths are wrong. It allows perfect liberty of conscience and freedom of views in matters, pertaining to God and religion. Accordingly, he who worships idols of gods is as much a follower of Hinduism, as one who meditates on one God without name and form.

The real name for Hinduism is Dharma. The word "Dharma" has been translated into English as "religion". This causes confusion. Dharma is not religion in the real sense of the term. It is much more than religion. It is a way of life to perform a certain set of duties. It pervades and governs the whole life of man from birth to death and from childhood to old age. Hence we find so much importance attached to Dharma in the life of a Hindu, and so great a stress laid on the strict observance of Dharma in the holy scriptures of Hinduism.

Dharma is the inherent quality or the law of being of every thing in the universe. Thus everything in the world has got its own Dharma or inherent quality which

cannot be separated from it. As for example the Dharma of the fire is to burn and that of the Earth to rotate, Similarly man is born with certain inherent qualities or virtues which sustain and support him in every stage of life. That is what is called Dharma. Thus according to Hinduism a Brahman, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya, a Shudra, a student, a householder, a Sanyasin, a father, a son, a husband, a wife, a teacher, a pupil and a king—each of them has got his own Dharma which he has to observe in his life, in order to be happy in this world and the world beyond.

Hinduism is founded on the bed-rock of eternal truths like tolerance, non-violence, sacrifice, self-control, piety, penance and Nishkam Karma or action without desire for fruit. It is on account of this that Manu, the first law-giver of the world, has defined Dharma, in the following couplet, as the sum-total of those eternal virtues which are universal and not confined to, or monopolised by any particular Community, country or nation.

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रिय-निग्रहः ।

धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

“Steadfastness in calamity, forgiveness, control over senses, non-stealing, purity of mind and body, discrimination between right and wrong, right knowledge of both spiritual and mundane matters, truthfulness and non-anger—all the aforesaid eternal virtues, taken together, constitute what is called Dharma”.

Just as these eternal virtues are universal and common to whole humanity, so also Dharma which is the aggregate of all these virtues, is universal in its scope and appeal, as the readers will find from the following quotations :—

ऊर्ध्वबाहुविरोम्येष न च कश्चिच्छृणोति मे ।
धर्मादर्थश्च कामश्च स किमर्थं न सेव्यते ॥

Vyasa the great sage says—“With my arms raised I cry aloud, but no body listens to me. I say that Artha (material prosperity) and Kama (fulfilment of desires) both flow from observance of Dharma. Then why do not people pursue Dharma ?” (Mahabharata)

कामार्थौ लिप्तमानस्तु धर्ममेवादितश्चरेत् ।
नहि धर्मादपेत्यार्थः कामो वापि कदाचन ॥

“One who seeks the attainment of happiness in this world, must start with the pursuit of Dharma. By ignoring Dharma one can achieve neither material prosperity nor worldly happiness.” (Mahabharata)

धर्म एव प्लवो नान्यः स्वर्गं समभिवाञ्छताम् ।

स च नौर्वणिजस्तटं जलधेः पारमिच्छतः ॥

“For those wishing to sail to heaven, Dharma is the only raft. Dharma is the boat for those who wish to cross over to the other side of the ocean in the form of this world” (Mahabharata)

कान्तारवनदुर्गेषु कृच्छ्रेष्वापत्सु संभ्रमे ।

उद्यतेषु च शस्त्रेषु नास्ति धर्मवतां भयम् ॥

“Men who firmly stand on Dharma, have no fear from any quarter. They remain fearless in inaccessible forests, in calamities, in difficult situation, in battle or even when there is before him a man with sword in hand, ready to strike him dead.”

(Mahabharata)

अजरामरवत् प्राज्ञो विद्यामर्थं च चिन्तयेत् ।

गृहीत इव केशेषु मृत्युना धर्ममाचरेत् ॥

“The wise one should accumulate Knowledge and worldly goods slowly and steadily, as if he would never grow old and would never die. But he should follow Dharma, as if death itself has caught hold of him by his hair.”

(Mahabharata)

एक एव सुहृद्धर्मो निधनेऽप्यनुयाति यः ।

शरीरेण समं नाशं सर्वमन्यद्वि गच्छति ॥

“Dharma is the only real friend of man, because it accompanies him even after his death, while every thing else is either left behind or perishes along with his body.”

(Mahabharata)

मृतं शरीरमुत्सृज्य काष्ठलोष्ठसमं क्षितौ ।

विमुखा बान्धवा यान्ति धर्मस्तमनुगच्छति ॥

“When a man dies, his relatives and friends leave his dead body on the ground like a piece of wood or a lump of earth and turn their back upon him. It is Dharma alone which stands by him and accompanies him to the next world.”
(*Mahabharata*)

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥

“If you kill Dharma, it will surely kill you. On the other hand, if you support and protect Dharma, it will support and protect you. Dharma should not, therefore, be harmed or killed, lest the killed or harmed Dharma should kill you.”
(*Mahabharata*)

न जातु कामान्न भयान्न लोभाद्धर्मं त्यजेज्जीवितस्यापि हेतोः ।
धर्मो नित्यः सुखदुःखे त्वनित्ये जीवो नित्यो हेतुरस्य त्वनित्यः ॥

“One must not forsake one's Dharma for the sake of anything in the world, nor for the sake of even his precious life. Dharma is eternal and ever-lasting, while pleasure and pain of life are transitory—they come and pass away.”
(*Mahabharata*)

आहारनिद्राभयमैथुनं च सामान्यमेतत् पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।
धर्मो हि तेषामधिको विशेषो धर्मेण हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥

“Pleasure and pain of the senses are common to men as well as to animals and birds, but the attainment of eternal bliss by practice of Dharma is the distinct individuality of man.”

Hinduism—The Universal Religion

The holy books of Hinduism—the Vedas, the Smritis, and the Puranas—are all unanimous in declaring that there is one Ultimate Reality from which this whole universe has sprung. This Ultimate Reality which has been called by various names such as God, Brahma, Supreme Being, Ishwar, Allah or by any other name you like, is imminent in fire, in water, in the air, in the whole universe, in all bushes and plants and in all living creatures. He is one without a second, as the Vedas—the oldest literary monument of the world—declare in the following words :—

“एकमेवाद्वितीयं ब्रह्म ।”

“एकं सद्विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति ।”

“एकं सन्तं बहुधा कल्पयन्ति ।”

“There is only one god—one without a second.”
“That one is called by the wise by various names.”
“Although He is One, people have different notions about him”.

The Upanishads also say the same thing :—

एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढः, सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ।
कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः, साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥

“There is only one God who is hidden within us all, who pervades everything, who is inner self of all living beings and is the controller of all that is going on in this universe. He is the indweller of all creatures, the disinterested witness of all the activities of the world and one intelligent principle without a compeer.”

(*Swetaswataropanishad*)

न तस्य कश्चित् पतिरस्ति लोके न चेशिता नैव च तस्य लिङ्गम् ।
स कारणं करणाधिपाधिपो न चास्य कश्चिज्जनिता न चाधिपः ॥

“He owes allegiance to none, nor is He amenable to any one's authority or control. He has no distinguishing mark either, nor has He any origin, or progenitor or protector.”

(*Swetaswataropanishad*)

तमोश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरं तं देवतानां परमं च दैवतम् ।
पतिं पतीनां परमं परस्तात् विदाम देवं भुवनेशमीड्यम् ॥

“We adore Him who is the lord of all gods, Who is the Presiding Deity of all the deities, Who is the master of all masters and Who is the lord of the entire universe.”

(*Swetaswatropanishad*)

यं शैवाः समुपासते शिव इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनो
बौद्धा बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्त्तेति नैयायिकाः ।
अर्हन्तितत्पथ जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः
सोऽयं वो विदधातु वाञ्छितफलं त्रैलोक्यनाथो हरिः ॥

“May the Supreme Lord of the whole universe grant you your desired object—the Lord whom the Shaivas

worship as shiva, the Vedanties adore as Brahma, the Buddhists extol as Buddha, the Naiyayikas (Logicians) hold as the Creator, the Jains venerate as Arhan and the Mimansakas regard as Karma."

भगवान् वासुदेवो हि सर्वभूतेष्ववस्थितः ।
एतज्ज्ञानं हि सर्वस्य मूलं धर्मस्य शाश्वतम् ॥

"The Knowledge that God or Supreme Being dwells in the heart of every living creature, is the eternal and abiding principle of Dharma."

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसःपरमुच्यते ।
ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य धिष्ठितम् ।

"The Supreme Being is the light of all lights and is beyond darkness. He is the knowledge and also the object of knowledge and is seated in the hearts of all."

(Bhagwad Gita)

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं यथा गच्छति सागरम् ।
सर्वदेवनमस्कारः केशवं प्रति गच्छति ॥

"Just as water, falling from the clouds in the sky, ultimately goes to the ocean, similarly salutations offered to any divinity, ultimately reach the same Supreme Reality."

In Bhagwadgita Lord Krishna says the same thing :—

येऽप्यन्यदेवताभक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ॥

“Even those who are devoted to other gods and worship them with sincere faith, in their own way, they also worship me indirectly and I accept their worship, as done to me.”

The above quotations from the holy books of the Hindus are sufficient to prove that if there is any religion that can claim to be a really catholic, liberal and universal religion, it is Hinduism which allows perfect liberty to worship or to follow any faith according to one's conviction, provided one does not interfere in the liberty of others to follow their own faith, according to their own convictions.



Universal Prayers

Hinduism is a religion of humanity. There are innumerable prayers in sacred scriptures of Hindus which are addressed to Supreme Being for the well-being of not Hindus alone, but for the well-being of entire humanity, without distinction of caste, creed or colour. These prayers breathe a unique spirit of universality and spirituality and are couched in words of rare simplicity and eloquence, as will be evident from the following quotations :—

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।

“We meditate upon that Supreme Effulgence of that Radiant Being who is the creator of all things. May He inspire and direct our intellect, so that we may realise the Truth !”
(*Rig Veda*)

असतो मा सद् गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्मांसमृतं गमय ॥

“O Lord ! Lead me from unreal to real, from darkness of ignorance to light of knowledge and from death to immortality.”
(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*)

स्वस्ति पन्थां अनुचरेम सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव ।
पुनर्ददता अघ्नता जानता संगमेमहि ॥

“May we follow the path of goodness for all times, like the Sun and the Moon, moving eternally in the sky. May we be charitable to one another. May we not kill or be violent to one another. May we know the good points of others and may we unite together.”

(*Rig Veda*)

विश्वानि देव सवितर्दुरितानि परासुव
यद्भद्रं तन्न आसुव ।

“O Lord, Creator of the universe, we pray Thee to wipe off all our vices and confor upon us all the virtues and create in us impulse for good deeds.” (*Rig Veda*)

उदुत्तमं वरुण पाशमस्मदबाधमम् विमध्यतमं श्रथाय ।
अथादित्य ! ब्रूते वयं तवानागसो अदितये स्याम ॥

“O God, do thou cut off all our shackles of mind and body and free us from worldly bondages ! O Eternal Being, by faithfully obeying Thy commands, we shall be freed from all sins and thus enjoy eternal bliss.”

(*Rig Veda*)

त्वया वयं पवमानेन साम
भरे कृतं विचिनुयाम शश्वत् ।

तन्नो मित्रो वरुणो मा महन्ता-
मदितिः सिन्धु पृथिवी उत द्यौः ।

“O God, through Thy holy grace, may we be able to perform our various duties faithfully in the midst of the turmoils of worldly life ! May the Sun and the Moon, the earth and the sea , the sky and the heaven be always favourable to us and make us great !” (Rig Veda)

यज्जाग्रतो दूरमुदेति दैवं
तदु सुप्तस्य तथैवेति ।
दूरंगमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

“My mind which covers great distances and reaches far off regions during the waking hours and behaves similarly in sleep and which is the light of all lights and the director of all sense-organs—may that mind of mine ever have the noblest of resolves and the highest of aspirations.”

अविनयमपनय विष्णो दमय मनः शमय मृगतृष्णम् ।
भूतदयां विस्तारय तारय संसारसागरतः ॥

“O Lord ! Instil humility in my mind and remove arrogance from my heart ; control my mind ; free me from the mirage of vain hopes and endless desires ; broaden the area of compassion in my heart ; and help me cross over the ocean of this mundane existence.”

शं नो वातः पवतां शं नस्तपतु सूर्यः ।
 शं नः कनिक्रदद् देवः पर्जन्योऽभिवर्षतु ॥

“May the wind blow gently. bringing peace to all. May the Sun shine, bringing peace to all. May the thundering clouds shower peace on all along with rains.”

द्वयोः शान्तिः, अन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः, पृथिवी शान्तिः,
 आपः शान्तिः, ओषधयः शान्तिः, वनस्पतयः शान्तिः,
 विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिः, ब्रह्म शान्तिः, सर्वं शान्तिः
 शान्तिरेव ।

“Unto the heaven be peace. Unto the Sky and Earth be peace. Peace be unto the waters, unto herbs and unto trees. Unto all the gods be peace. Unto Brahman be Peace, verily Peace”.
 (Yajur Veda)

मित्रस्य मा चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षन्ताम् ।
 मित्रस्याहं चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे,
 मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे ॥

“O God ! I pray that all creatures may look at me with the eye of a friend. I may also look at all creatures with the eye of a friend. Let us all see one another with the eye of a friend.”

Good-will Towards All

Non-violence, compassion, fellow-feeling, sympathy and good-will towards all have been enjoined by Hinduism, in very impressive language, as will be evident from the following quotations. In this connection it is also to be noted that according to Hinduism, God is present not only in human beings, but in all other animals and plants and that it is a duty of every Hindu to feed not only human beings in need, but even birds, beasts and all other creatures that have life.

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत् ॥

“May happiness come to all ! May all be hale and hearty ! May all see the best of life ! Let no one be miserable !”

(Mahabharata)

शिवमस्तु सर्वजगतां

परहितनिरता भवन्तु भूतग्रामाः ।

दोषा प्रयान्तु शान्तिं

सर्वत्र सुखी भवतु लोकः ॥

“May there be welfare to the whole world ! May all beings devote themselves to doing good to others ! May all evils be removed from the world ! May all be

happy in all ways and everywhere !”

यदन्येषां हितं न स्यात् आत्मनः कर्म पौरुषम् ।
अपत्रपेत वा येन न तत् कुर्यात् कथंचन ॥

“That action which is not conducive to the good of others or which puts us to shame, should not be performed by any man.”

(Mahabharata)

न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।
कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनां आर्तिनाशनम् ॥

“I desire not worldly prosperity, nor even a kingdom. I do not long for heaven or even release from the troubles of birth and death. My only desire is that I may take upon myself the sorrows of all creatures, so that they may be freed from sorrow, pain and misery.”

(Mahabharata)

यथात्मनि तथा पुत्रे हितमिच्छथ सर्वदा ।
तथा समस्तभूतेषु वर्तध्वं हितबुद्धयः ॥
ये मेऽद्य स्निह्यते तस्य शिवमस्तु सदा भूवि ।
यश्च मां द्वेष्टि लोकेऽस्मिन् सोऽपि भद्राणि पश्यतु ॥

“Just as you wish for your welfare and that of your sons and relatives, in the same manner you should wish

for the welfare of all beings and treat them like your near and dear.”

“Let not only those enjoy good fortune who are affectionate and friendly towards me, but may even those enjoy good luck, who are not friendly to me !”

(*Markandeya Purana*)

सर्वेषां यः सुहृन्नित्यं सर्वेषां च हिते रतः ।
कर्मणा मनसा वाचा स धर्मं वेद नेतरः ॥

“He who by his action, mind and speech, is continually engrossed in the welfare of others and is also always a friend of others—such a man knows the real meaning of Dharma.”

(*Mahabharata*)

आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु परद्रव्येषु लोष्ठवत् ।
मानवत् परदारेषु यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

“He who looks upon all beings as his own self, who regards others' money as clod of earth, who treats others' wives as his mother, such a man is fit to realise Supreme Being in this very life.

भगवान् वासुदेवो हि सर्वभूतेष्ववस्थितः ।
एतद् ज्ञानं हि सर्वस्य मूलं धर्मस्य शाश्वतम् ॥

“The knowledge that Supreme Soul dwells in the heart of every being, is the eternal root—principle of all Dharma (religion)”

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठतं परमेश्वरम् ।
विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

“Verily he is really the seer who sees God installed in the heart of every being, as the only imperishable substance among all perishable things.”

(*Bhagwadgita*)

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥

“Verily he should be regarded as the perfect Yogi who looks upon all as equal to himself so far as pleasure and pain are concerned.”

(*Bhagwadgita*)

श्रूयतां धर्मसर्वस्वं श्रुत्वा चैवोपधार्यताम् ।
आत्मनः प्रतिकूलानि परेषां न समाचरेत् ॥

“Listen to what is called the essence of Dharma, and having listened hold on to it. This is the essence of Dharma, namely that you must not do to others what you do not approve for yourself.”

(*Mahabharata*)

उदरं श्रियते यावत् तावत्स्वत्वं हि देहिनाम् ।
ततोऽधिकं यो मन्येत स स्तेनो दण्डमर्हति ॥

“Even if a man has extra riches, he owns only that much which is absolutely necessary for him. The rest he must use for charity. If he uses his extra riches for himself, he is a thief and deserves punishment.”

(*Bhagwata Purana*)

Control Over Senses

Hinduism has laid special stress on control over senses. It is the very foundation of success in life, both materially and spiritually. No edifice can be erected without a strong foundation, Similarly no success in life can be achieved without an effective control over one's senses. Our senses are like unruly and uncontrolled horses. Just as an unruly and untrained horse may go astray and lead the rider to destruction, in the same way, if the senses are not controlled and restrained, they may bring about the utter ruin of the individual. He who can not control his senses and yields himself to them, is sure to meet with failure in life. But if he is able to keep check and restraint over them, he undoubtedly prepares himself for success, in any walk of life he may choose for himself.

For attaining perfect control over one's senses, observance of certain rules of conduct is necessary, as prescribed by Patanjali in his philosophy of yoga. They are five yamas i.e. Ahimsa or Non-killing, Satya or Truth, Asteya or Non-stealing, Brahmacharya or Continence (Sexual chastity) and Aparigraha or Non-attachment to worldly objects. These five yamas are in other words, the Five Panch-shilas of Buddhism. They are—

1. Do not kill any living being.
2. Do not take what is not given to you.
3. Do not tell a lie.

4. Do not use any kind of intoxicant.
5. Do not have an unchaste sexual intercourse with anybody.

The Readers will find below a number of quotations from upanishads and other holy books of Hinduism. showing the necessity and importance of control over senses, in the life of a person :—

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
 बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥
 इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयांस्तेषु गोचरान् ।
 आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥
 यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्ययुक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
 तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि दुष्टाश्वा इव सारथेः ॥
 विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवान्नरः ।
 सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥

“know that the body is like a chariot on which rides the soul, as the owner of the chariot. The senses are like the horses which are yoked to the chariot. The Buddhi or the intellect is the driver of the chariot and the mind is the reins. Buddhi, the driver holds the reins (i.e. controls the mind) to restrain and check the horses i.e. the senses. The road on which the chariot moves, is the world of objects over which the senses move. If the rein (mind) is not held firmly, the senses like the unruly or wicked horses will get out of control and the chariot

will not reach its destined goal. But if the man is wise and if his mind is controlled then his senses will act like good horses driven by a good driver.” (*Kathopanishad*)

न जातु कामः कामनामुपभोगेन शाम्यति ।

हविषा कृष्णवर्त्मव भूय एवाभिवर्द्धते ॥

“Carnal desires can never be quenched by indulging more and more in the pleasures of senses. The more you try to satisfy the senses, the more excited they become. They are like the fire which cannot be extinguished, but is inflamed all the more, by the pouring of ghee into it.”

(*Manusmriti*)

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां विषयेष्वपहारिषु ।

संयमे यत्नमातिष्ठेत् विद्वान्यन्तेव वाजिनाम् ॥

“Just as a skilful driver Keeps the horses of his car on the right path, so should a person try by all means, to restrain the senses from falling into the temptation of sensual pleasures which lead him to sinful acts.”

(*Manusmriti*)

इन्द्रियाणां प्रसंगेन दोषमुच्छ्रित्यसंशयम् ।

संनियम्य तु तान्येव ततः सिद्धिं नियच्छति ॥

“The soul, being enslaved by the senses, becomes liable to commit vices, but when it subjects the senses to its control, it becomes successful.

(*Manusmriti*)

न हृष्यति महत्यर्थे व्यसने च न शोचाति ।
यो वा परिमितप्रज्ञः स दान्त इति कीर्त्यते ॥

“One who is neither puffed up with joy at his prosperity nor depressed by calamity, but has his mind completely under his control, is styled as Dant (self controlled).”

(Mahabharata)

इन्द्रियाण्येव तत् सर्वं यत् स्वर्गनरकावुभौ ।
निगृहीतनिस्सृष्टानि स्वर्गाय नरकाय च ॥

“Heaven and hell are our own senses. When we control them, it is heaven; but when we let them loose, it is hell.”

(Mahabharata)

नोदकक्लिन्नगात्रोहि स्नात इत्यभिधीयते ।
स स्नातो यो दमस्नातः स बाह्याभ्यन्तरे शुचिः ॥

“Wetting one's limbs with water is not bathing. He who is bathed with self-control and restraint of senses, is really bathed. It is he who is really clean inside and outside.”

(Mahabharata)

पूर्वे वयसि यः शान्तः स शान्त इति मे मतिः ।
धातुषु क्षीयमाणेषु शमः कस्य न जायते ॥

“Who is not subdued by passions in youth, he alone is termed restrained. When passions lose their fury in old age, restraint comes of its own accord.” (Mahabharata)

मनसा निश्चयं कृत्वा ततो वाचा विधीयते ।
क्रियते कर्मणा पश्चात् प्रधानं वै मनस्ततः ॥

“Mind makes the decision, speech follows it. Lastly it is rendered into deeds. Thus the mind is the root Cause of all. Hence one should try one’s best to get control over one’s mind.”
(Mahabharata)

इन्द्रियाणां प्रदुष्टानां हयानामिव धावताम् ।
कुर्वीत धृत्या सारथ्यं संहृत्येन्द्रियगोचरान् ॥

“Like a driver who keeps in check his unruly horses from going astray, one should patiently keep under control one’s senses which are prone to run headlong towards the alluring objects of enjoyment.”
(Valmiki Ramayana)

दूरगं बहुधा गामि प्रार्थनासंशयात्मकम् ।
मनः सुनियतं यस्य य सुखी प्रेत्य वेह च ॥

“Mind traverses far and wide. It is full of aspirations and doubts. One who bridles mind becomes happy here and hereafter.”
(Mahabharata)

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

“He is really a man of stable mind and firm determinations who is not perturbed when he is overwhelmed

with sorrow and who is indifferent amid pleasures and is free from passion, fear and anger."

(*Bhagwadgita*)

ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः संगस्तेष्वपजायते ।

संगात् संजायते कामः कामात् क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥

क्रोधात् भवति संमोहः संमोहात् स्मृति-विभ्रमः ।

स्मृतिभ्रंशात् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात् प्रणश्यति ॥

"Musing on the objects of senses, man conceives an attachment to them; from the attachment he develops a desire for them and wants to have them any-how; from desire he is led to anger when he is frustrated; from anger comes delusion and when there is delusion, memory gets confused; confused memory causes loss of Buddhi (wisdom or reason); and when a man loses his mental balance or reason he is sure to meet his destruction."

(*Bhagwadgita*)

चंचलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् दृढम् ।

तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥

Arjuna said to Lord Krishna, "Verily the mind is very fickle and restless, impetuous, strong and difficult to bend. It is as hard to control it as to control the wind."

(*Bhagwadgita*)

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

Then the Blessed Lord Krishna said "What you say is true. No doubt the mind is fickle and hard to control, But it can be controlled by constant practice and by dispassion."

(*Bhagwadgita*)

इन्द्रियार्थेषु सर्वेषु न प्रसज्येत कामतः ।
अतिप्रसक्तिं चैतेषां मनसा संनिवर्तयेत् ॥

"One should not give one-self excessively to enjoying the objects of senses. Excessive attachment of mind to enjoyments of sensuous pleasures, should be avoided."



Truth Alone Wins

(Satyameva Jayate)

Hinduism is nothing but a perpetual quest for truth. Truth is another name for Dharma. If there is no truth there is no Dharma. It is truth which maintains this whole universe. Holy books of Hinduism go so far as to say that God and Truth are one and the same. If one realises truth in one's life, one automatically becomes one with God. Hence the special importance attached to Truth in Hinduism, as the following quotations will show :—

अनृतात् सत्यमुपैमि

“May I discard false-hood to attain Truth!”

सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मो नानृतात् पातकं परम् ।

“There is no religion greater than Truth and no sin greater than false-hood.”
(Manusmriti)

सत्यं स्वर्गस्य सोपानं पारावारस्य नौरिव ।

“Truth is the ladder to reach heaven. It is also the boat to cross over the ocean of this mundane existence.”

(Manusmriti)

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः ।
येनाक्रमन्त्यृषयो ह्याप्तकामा यत्र तत्सत्यस्य परमं निधानम् ॥

“Truth alone wins, never untruth. It is by Truth alone that the divine path is opened whereby the wise go to the highest abode of Supreme Being, with their desires fulfilled.”
(Mundakopanishad)

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूषन् अपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

“Truth is covered by a false but shining lid. Uncover it, O God, so that the followers of Truth may see it.”
(Ishavasyopanishad)

सत्येन धार्यते पृथ्वी, सत्येन तपते रविः ।
सत्येन वायवो वान्ति, सर्वं सत्ये प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

“It is by Truth alone that the Earth maintains itself, that the Sun shines in the sky and that the wind has power to blow. Verily all things have their mainstay on Truth alone.”
(Manusmriti)

असत्प्रलापं पारुष्यं पैशुन्यमनृतं तथा ।
चत्वारि वाचा राजेन्द्र न जल्पेन्नानुचिन्तयेत् ॥

“One should neither think nor speak evil, harsh, slanderous or false words.”
(Mahabharata)

अग्ने व्रतपते व्रतं चरिष्यामि तच्छुकेयम् ।
तन्मे राध्यतां इदमहमनुतात् सत्यमुपैमि ॥

“O God, Protector of the vows, help me that I may always be steadfast to my vow of truth, that I may always speak the truth and always be true in my thinking, in my speech and in my actions. O God, help me to extract truth from untruth.”

ऋषयश्चैव देवाश्च सत्यमेव हि मेनिरे ।
सत्यवादी हि लोकेऽस्मिन् परं गच्छति चाक्षयम् ॥

“The saints and sages have always regarded truth as the greatest thing in the world. It is only the truthful who pass from the mortal world into a life of immortality.”
(*Ramayana*)

उद्विजन्ते यथा सर्पान्निरादनुतवादिनः ।
धर्मः सत्यं परो लोके मूलं सर्वस्य चोच्यते ॥

“Even as we shrink from a poisonous serpent, even so should we avoid and shun a liar. Truth is at the root of everything in the world.”
(*Ramayana*)

सत्यमेवेश्वरो लोके सत्ये धर्मः सदाश्रितः ।
सत्यमूलानि सर्वाणि सत्यान्नास्ति परं पदम् ॥

“Truth is the Supreme ruler of this world. Truth is the basis of all morality and of all that is good and noble. There is positively nothing, superior to truth.”
(*Ramayana*)

In Mahabharat Bhishma Pitamah solemnly declares :

परित्यजेयं त्रैलोक्यं राज्यं देवेषु वा पुनः ।

यद्वाप्यधिकमेताभ्यां न तु सत्यं कथंचन ॥

“I may renounce the three worlds, the Kingdom of heaven or anything that may be greater than these two. But truth I shall never renounce.”

त्यजेच्च पृथिवी गन्धं आपश्च रसमात्मनः ।

ज्योतिस्तथा त्यजेद्रूपं वायुः स्पर्शगुणं त्यजेत् ॥

त्यजेच्छब्दं तथाकाशं सोमः शीतांशुतां त्यजेत् ।

न त्वहं सत्यमुत्स्रष्टुं व्यवस्येयं कथंचन ॥

“Earth may renounce its odour, water may renounce its moisture, lighting may renounce its attribute of exhibiting forms, the air may renounce its attribute of being perceptible to touch, the space may renounce its capacity of generating sound, the moon may renounce its cool rays, but truth I shall never renounce.”

अद्भिर्गर्त्राणि शुद्ध्यन्ति मनः सत्येन शुद्ध्यति ।

विद्यातपोभ्यां भूतात्मा बुद्धिज्ञानेन शुद्ध्यति ॥

“The body, with all its limbs, is purified by water. The mind is purified by truth, the soul of a man is purified by study and penance; and the intellect is purified by knowledge.”

(Manusmiti)



Advice to Young Men

From Upanishad

सत्यं वद । धर्मं चर । स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः ।
सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । धर्मान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । कुशलान्न
प्रमदितव्यम् । भूतयै न प्रमदितव्यम् । स्वाध्याय-
प्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ॥

“Always speak the truth. Practice virtue and do your duties. Do not neglect your studies. Do not swerve from truth. Do not swerve from Dharma. Do not deviate from the path of good. Do not neglect to do something for the uplift of the society. Do not fail to keep up your study and to refresh what you have learnt.”

मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव । आचार्यदेवो भव ।
अतिथिदेवो भव । दान्यनवद्यानि कर्माणि तानि
सेवितव्यानि, नो इतराणि ॥

“Respect your mother and look upon her as god.
Respect your father and look upon him as god.
Respect your teacher and look upon him as god.
Respect your guest and look upon him as god.
Perform works that are blameless and virtuous and
avoid what is blameworthy and censurable.”

श्रद्धया देयम् । अश्रद्धया अदेयम् । श्रिया देयम् ।
हया देयम् । भिया देयम् । संविदा देयम् ॥

“Give charity with faith but never without faith. Give in abundance as far as possible. Give with humility. Give with fear. Give to redeem promise.”

अथ यदि ते कर्म-विचिकित्सा वा वृत्तिविचिकित्सा
वा स्यात्, ये तत्र ब्राह्मणाः संमर्शिनः युक्ता आयुक्ताः
अलक्षा धर्मकामाः स्युः यथा ते तत्र वर्त्तेरन् तथा तत्र
वर्त्तेथाः । एष आदेशः । एष उपदेशः ॥

“If you ever have doubt in your mind as to what is right and what is wrong, what should be done and what should not be done, you should follow the example of those persons who are prudent, impartial, gentle and pious. This is the teaching and this is the advice.”

(*Taittiriyaopaniṣad*)



HINDU SYMBOLS



Om

This (Om) is the symbol of the idea that God, the creator of every thing, is infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and imperceptible.



Shree

This (Shree) is considered to be the symbol of wealth, prosperity, comfort, calm and well-being.



Swastika

This (Swastika) symbol is most sacred and ancient. At least for more than last 8,000 years, it has been the mark of Aryan (Hindu) civilisation and culture. This symbol signifies an implied prayer for success, accomplishment and perfection, in every walk of life, under the guidance of the almighty. It is found not only in India, but in the Buddhist and other foreign countries. All the Aryan scripts, i.e. Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Siamese, Singhalese, Roman, Greek, Latin etc. are believed to have originated from this very symbol (Swastika).

